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THREE GREAT BATTLES.

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PREFACE.

The following articles were published soon after the events described in them, and are reprinted now to supply an occasional demand among the writer's friends.

The account of the Battle of Buena Vista was prepared from the detailed reports of the different commanders, with the aid of Carleton's Book, and verbal descriptions from parties present in the fight. General Taylor expressed himself satisfied with its accuracy; and it obtained the very undeserved credit, at the time, of being the production of an eye witness.

Many years after the account of the Battle of Buena Vista was written, the writer was struck, as he read Thiers' Consulate and Empire, with the extraordinary similarity that existed between the Battle of Buena Vista and the Battle of Marengo, even in the fact that while Marengo made Buonaparte Emperor, Buena Vista made Taylor President.

The object of the battles was the same,—to prevent the passage of an army along a valley. The means adopted—the formation of a line across the valley,—the successful attack on the left of the line,—the wheeling backwards of the centre and right wing upon the right flank as a pivot,—the march of the attacking force along the valley through the opening thus made,—the absence of both commanders from the field up to this time,—the renewal of the fight by an attack on the left flank of the advancing column—its destruction,—the final attack by the main body to which it had belonged,—all these features were the same in the two cases. The only difference was, that Napoleon did, with Kellerman's cavalry, what Taylor did with Sherman and Bragg's artillery,—and that Melas

capitulated, while Santa Anna retreated. The numbers engaged in the two battles were, it is true, very different; but the theory of the contests was the same—and the similarity of the results remarkable.

The Seven Days' Battle was written with the assistance of such very imperfect materials as the newspapers and newspaper maps afforded; and the theory of the article was the result of such inferences as the military education of the writer enabled him to draw. He has since seen the Prince de Joinville's account, and read Estvan's book, as well as General McClellan's report; and were the article to be re-written, as matter of history, there would, doubtless, be some change in the details. But there is nothing in it, as it stands, so far wrong, as to make the reprint of it, for the purpose above mentioned, inexpedient. It was an attempt to impress the public with a sense of the difficulties which the commander of a large army had to contend with, and to induce it to place more confidence in an honest and intelligent General, competently educated, than in the whole tribe of outsiders. That it failed in its purpose need not now be stated.

The Pinch of the Fight at Gettysburg was prepared from a careful inspection of the regimental and brigade reports of the division that is particularly referred to, and with the advantage of personal intercourse with a distinguished officer, who bore a conspicuous part in the fight, and who was recovering slowly from a severe wound under the writer's roof. The matters of minute detail contained in private letters, which the writer was permitted to peruse, suggested the form of the article, as a means of giving to the description the interest that always attaches to a narrative of personal adventure.

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Buena Vista Gen.l Taylor directing Capt. Bragg
to use a little more Grape

BUENA VISTA.

February 22 and 23, 1864.

The leading article in the New York Evening Post, of the 4th instant, claims for General John E. Wool the credit of the battle of Buena Vista. The Courier and Enquirer has called upon the General to disclaim the pretensions thus set up for him. As yet, no answer has been given to this call; although sufficient time is believed to have elapsed since the publication in the Post.

A claim of this kind, is of sufficient importance to notice; and the object of this communication is to show how utterly unfounded it is, in any one view that can be taken of the battle—in the purpose for which it was fought, the manner in which it was fought, or the results of it.

The battle of Buena Vista was, in fact, both lost and won: it comprised within it a defeat and a victory. The public mind has rested on the latter, and forgotten the former. But it took place, nevertheless; and what is most remarkable, considering the pretensions now made, but as certain, nevertheless, as it is remarkable, is, that of this defeat, which was swallowed up in the subsequent victory, General John E. Wool was the hero, if there can be the hero of a defeat. Understand us clearly. We do not mean to say that there was a victory gained by us and a defeat suffered by our opponents: but we mean to

say, that the Americans were defeated at the battle of Buena Vista, while under the exclusive command of General Wool, and, according to all human probability, would have "stayed defeated," if General Taylor, arriving on the field after the defeat, had not taken matters out of the hands of General Wool, and retrieved the disasters which our arms had sustained under the leading of the latter.

In showing this, we shall rely upon the official documents, and upon the admirable work of Capt. Carleton, called by the name of the battle—a work which does honor to the head and heart of its author as well as to the literature of our country. A work too, written by one who is the friend and eulogist of General Wool.

If we succeed in our showing, our readers will not be justified in supposing that General Wool did not do his duty at Buena Vista, or that he is not a good officer; but they will be perfectly justified in exclaiming at the folly of his friends, in setting up the claims they have done.

In the beginning of 1847, the Americans were in force at Tampico, under General Patterson, and at Monterey and Saltillo, under General Taylor; while the flower of the Mexican army, commanded by Santa Anna, was at San Luis Potosi. The Mexican General was unable to move against either of the American columns, for fear of the march of the other upon San Luis: but, when it was determined by our Government to attack Vera Cruz, and Patterson left Tampico, and the best of Taylor's troops were withdrawn from him, Santa Anna made his magnificent march across the desert, certain of crushing the remnant of the army at Agua Nueva, and retaking, in succession, Saltillo, Monterey, and all the places in our possession on the line of the Rio Grande—getting back again, in time to operate on the route from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico. The plan was worthy of a great military mind, and every chance seemed to be in its favor:

TAYLOR

Z. Taylor

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Z. Taylor

[illegible] 1850 [illegible] aged 66. Years

and so confident was its author of success, that he despatched, as he advanced, a large force of cavalry, to get into the rear of our army, by unfrequented passes in the mountains, to be in readiness to intercept the fugitives from the battle he was about to fight.

Without going into the details of the campaign, it is enough to say here, that, after crossing the desert, SANTA ANNA'S road to Saltillo and Monterey lay through the valley, in which was the hacienda, or farm house and outbuildings, of Buena Vista, from which the great battle, fought hard-by, received its name.

In this valley TAYLOR determined to make a stand; because the nature of the ground was admirably suited to the action of a small army against a large one. The battle, which was the result of this determination, had for its object, on the part of the Mexicans, to open the valley for the free passage of their troops; and, on the part of TAYLOR, to keep it closed against them. The party, which did not accomplish its object, was, of course, the defeated one.

It was not necessary, in order to give SANTA ANNA the victory, that he should take the whole American army prisoners of war, or destroy it—not at all; the opening of the road to Saltillo was victory for the Mexican General.

So, on the other hand, it was not necessary, in order to give TAYLOR, the victory, that he should capture his enemies or annihilate them. He was victor, if with but a single regiment left, of his whole army, he kept the valley closed against the Mexicans. This is necessary to be understood, if it is not already sufficiently plain to our readers. Battles are not fought merely for the sake of the noise and the killing of men,—at least not very often,—but in view of objects, which are thought to justify them;—though some doubt whether there *are* any such objects. But to proceed:—

The valley in question cannot be better described than by supposing the reader to be standing on an eminence

and looking down it. Before him, he would see an apparently smooth surface, lying between mountains on the right hand and on the left, and seamed, along its centre, by the broad dry channel of a stream, lying considerably below the general surface. If he now attempted to walk on either side of the stream, and midway between it and the mountains, he would find, that, instead of being smooth, as it appeared from a distance, the ground was traversed by deep gullies running from the mountains to the stream, serving as water drains in the wet seasons, and having level plains, of greater or less width, between them. So that his road would be an up and down one, across an alternating succession of plains and gullies or ravines. In this respect he would find the walk on the right of the stream much worse than on the left; and he would come to the conclusion that the Mexicans had done wisely when they placed the main road close along the left side of the stream, and across the mouths of the ravines, which there opened or emptied, in wet weather, their waters into it. Supposing, now, our reader to be passing along the road, the stream would be close to him on the right, and on the left hand, he would have the mouths of the ravines—up which he would look towards the mountains—alternating with high ground, or bluffs, being the terminations, on that side, of the plains, we have described as lying between the ravines. He would observe, too, that one of these bluffs came much nearer to the stream than the others, so near, indeed, as to allow scant room for the road at its base; and if he ever had a military idea in his mind, the idea would at once cross it,—that this would be an admirable place for military resistance.

We trust that we have thus conveyed to our readers an idea of the valley in question, and the nature of the pass last mentioned, called by the Mexicans La Angostura, or

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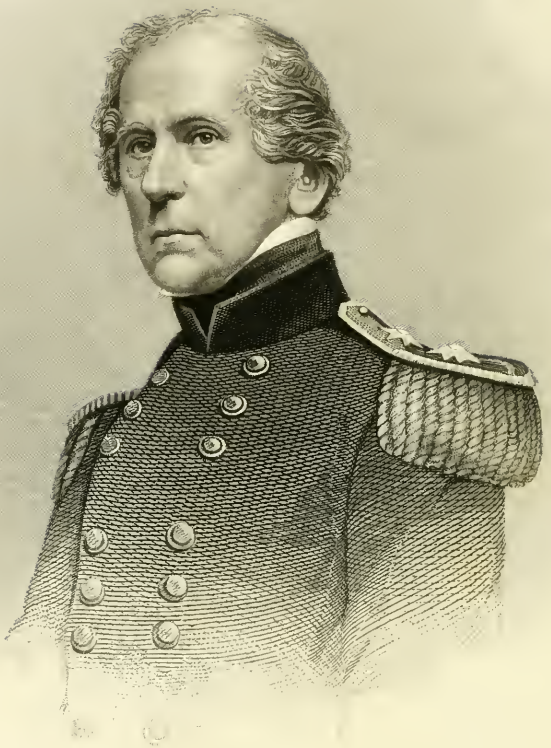

John Elliot

"The Narrows," which was the centre of the American line on the 22d February, 1847.

The credit of selecting the valley as the battle ground is claimed by General Wool, and he also claims the credit of placing the army of the Americans in array upon it. The array was simple, very good, suggested by the nature of the ground; and the idea of it was a range of men, extending from mountain to mountain across the valley. Our readers must not imagine a line of men to be here meant standing shoulder to shoulder; but bodies of men, placed in convenient positions, with greater or smaller intervals between them. The centre of this line was the main road, in which was placed a battery of eight pieces of cannon, afterwards reduced, when guns got to be in demand, to five;—and, hard-by the battery, were bodies of infantry. On the right of the stream was a single regiment and some cavalry with two guns, which it was supposed, would, with the aid of the gullies, be sufficient to stop the Mexicans, if they attempted to ascend the valley on that side. This force was afterwards brought across the stream to aid in the pinch of the fight. On the left of the stream, where the ravines were fewer, and the plains between them wider, were two regiments of infantry, suitably furnished with artillery: and extending from the central battery, on the road, to the base of the left-hand mountains. Cavalry and riflemen were posted on the skirt of the mountains. It would complicate our narrative to go more into detail, in regard to the description of force in each spot, and the names of commanders, without aiding the argument. Our readers will obtain better the general idea of the battle which we desire to give, without this minute information.

We have thus shown the position of the Americans across the valley.

To break this array, Santa Anna divided his army into three columns, each of which nearly doubled the

whole of Taylor's force. One of these was destined to open a passage along the road, and was opposed therefore to the eight gun battery. Another was intended to break its way between the mountain and the regiment nearest to it,—which would have been what military men call outflanking the Americans; and the third column was directed to attack the bodies of troops which were stationed on the left of the stream, and between the battery in the road and the mountains. The Americans were, in fact, in the position of a man opposed to three others, in a narrow passage;—the centre one trying to knock him down by a fair blow in front, and the others trying to get behind him to strike him in the back.

These being the positions of the armies, the battle began, on the afternoon of the 22d February, by an attempt of the Mexicans to get round the left of the American line, by climbing up the mountains, advancing, and then turning down; but as fast and as high as the Mexicans climbed, so fast and high climbed we—until, the top of the mountain being reached, no more climbing could be done; and with an occasional shot by way of keeping themselves warm, the climbers watched one another on the mountain until morning. This skirmishing was all the fighting of the first day. When it was seen that nothing more would be done until the morrow, General Taylor, who, besides fighting at Buena Vista, had to be prepared to protect Saltillo against the cavalry, already spoken of as being in his rear, left the field, with a regiment of foot and some dragoons, to make the proper defensive arrangements at that city. General Wool then assumed the command at Buena Vista; and when the morning of the 23d dawned, the fight recommenced under his direction exclusively, and upon his responsibility; and so continued, until, as our narrative will show, he was a beaten General, with an army under him, that

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having failed in the object for which it was fighting, was, so far, a defeated one—though not a routed one.

The battle of the 23d commenced by SANTA ANNA attempting to force the American left, that is, trying to pass between the left of the Americans and the mountain, overthrowing the regiment, nearest to its base. This regiment was the second Indiana. On its left, were the mountains; on its right were the Illinoians. These troops might be likened to a folding-door,—the Indiana regiment forming one side or valve, whose hinge was on the mountains, and whose lock was with the Illinoians, whose hinge, in turn, was the eight gun battery in the road. This door the Mexicans wanted to open, and they intended to attack the Indiana side, or valve, of it. But General LANE, who was in command here, thought it better to anticipate this attack, which he did by advancing against the approaching Mexicans, taking with the regiment three pieces of artillery.

There are those who think it might have been wiser had the Indianians awaited the attack, supported as they were by the riflemen and cavalry on the one side, and the Illinoians on the other—like the hinges and bolt of one side of a folding-door. Be this, however, as it may, the Indianians advanced, and checked for a while the approaching Mexicans; but, after they had fired twenty rounds of cartridges, they mistook an order to retreat for an order to run, and they incontinently turned tail and ran;—not in fear,—for their dead contradict that flatly—but in a panic. The gallant fellow who commanded the artillery then stood alone. And stand he continued to do, until an hundred foes, to one living man, were at the muzzles of his guns. He then turned, too, and slowly retreated before the Mexicans. Once in motion, the Indianians stopped not; and the place where their regiment had stood was now a wide and undefended gap, open to the free passage of the Mexicans up the valley. One side of

the folding-door, to pursue our illustration, was not only open, but was torn from its hinges and bolt, and its every material destroyed: and not only this, but the other side, the Illinoians, was forced round on its hinges, to allow freer room for horse and foot to pour through the opening by thousands. The morning had found the American line, between the battery on the road and the mountains, standing across and facing down the valley. Now one-third of this part of it was gone, and the remaining two-thirds, swung round parallel to the mountains, were firing on the Mexicans, in full march towards Saltillo.

How, then, stood the battle at this time? Was it lost or won? Lost, certainly, for the moment:—for SANTA ANNA had forced his way—which was his motive for fighting—and the Americans had failed to stop him—which was the object of the battle on their part.

It is at this moment that TAYLOR returns from Saltillo, retrieves the losses of WOOL and wins the day:—turns the defeat into a victory, and becomes the hero of the fight. How he did this, we will presently show; but, as this part of the narrative is the key of the whole case, we will pause, so as to obviate all doubts as to our correctness, by quoting from the documents.

We will go to CARLETON first. His testimony is that of a friend of WOOL:

"Our whole left had now been forced, and the enemy was in possession of every advantage arising from the peculiar nature of the ground, the alternate ridges and ravines being as much in his favor as ours. *It was at this critical juncture* that General TAYLOR arrived on the field from Saltillo, having completed his dispositions for the defence of the city."—*Battle of Buena Vista, pp.* 71, 72.

We quote next from TAYLOR'S official despatches, Ex. Doc. No. 1, p. 134:—"The enemy was now pouring masses of infantry and cavalry along the base of the

ENGRAVED BY J. SARTAIN FOR GRAHAM'S MAGAZINE

Your obt. servt.
Z. Taylor

FROM A SKETCH MADE BY CAPT. EATON AID DE CAMP CAMARGO MEXICO AUGUST 15TH 1846

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1847 by Geo. R. Graham in the Clerks office of the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania

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mountain on our left, and was gaining our rear in great force. At this moment I arrived upon the field."

We will not multiply extracts, but refer generally to the reports of the officers in command, in the above document, as showing the character and force of the enemy, who had gained the rear of the Americans on the return of TAYLOR from Saltillo.

Let us see, now, what was the position of the army on TAYLOR'S return to it. The battery in the road had repulsed the Mexican column sent against it, and had spared three of its guns for the plain above it. The regiment on the right of the stream, with the guns attached to it, had been brought over to the left bank, and was now, with the two Illinois regiments, in position, facing towards the mountains; and between these regiments and the mountains, was the gap, through which the Mexicans were advancing, under a heavy fire indeed, but still advancing. The artillery, not in the road at La Angostura, had been, all, or nearly all, concentrated at the same place. In other parts of the field, and nearer to the hacienda of Buena Vista, and in the rear of the American line of the morning, were bodies of our cavalry engaged in conflict with the advancing Mexicans, but not in force sufficient to drive them back.

As TAYLOR neared the field, he met the fugitives of the second Indiana regiment, and others, for others fled beside the second Indianians, and saw the Mexican force, that had broken through our line, advancing towards him. He had with him the Mississippi regiment of riflemen, which he at once despatched against the Mexican column, while he hastened to the spot where the artillery and the Kentucky and Illinois regiments still stood firm, and which was, in truth, the centre of the battle. From this spot, he at once ordered all the artillery, but four guns, to the rear, to aid in driving back the Mexicans, who had, already, been checked by the

Mississippians alone. A regiment that had, up to this time, remained near the battery in the road, was also ordered back for the same purpose. This purpose was accomplished; and the Mexican troops, which had passed through our line, while WOOL held command, soon became so fiercely pressed, so terribly cut up by the changes effected after the return of TAYLOR, that SANTA ANNA sent the flag of truce, which, as we all know, suspended their fate for a season, and enabled them to effect their escape out of a place that had become too hot to hold them.

But, to produce these results, TAYLOR had weakened himself greatly. SANTA ANNA saw his situation, and prepared, in one heavy charge, to crush him as he stood; strengthened, as the Mexican force then was, not only by its heavy reserves, for the first time brought into action, but by the soldiers who had escaped, alive, thanks to the flag of truce, from the rear of the American line.

Let us glance for a moment now, in a general way, at the state of affairs when the last charge of the Mexicans was to be made, and when TAYLOR was to stand or fall. He had with him three regiments, or parts of regiments, and four pieces of artillery. His front was rather towards the mountains still, his back towards the road, along the stream. On his right, but much in advance of him, was the whole Mexican army. On his left, and much farther off, and in the rear, were the troops, with which the Mexican column had been driven back. All that whip and spur and shout could do, to urge the jaded horses on,—all that men could do, who forgot their fatigue, in the desperate emergency of the occasion, was done, that these troops might reach TAYLOR before the Mexicans annihilated him. To keep the Mexicans at bay, till this force arrived to sustain him, was now the great object of the General. Instants were ages now. Both sides felt the crisis. It was a race of life and death, of victory and

Alexander del. Gavit Smithie f.

John E. Wool

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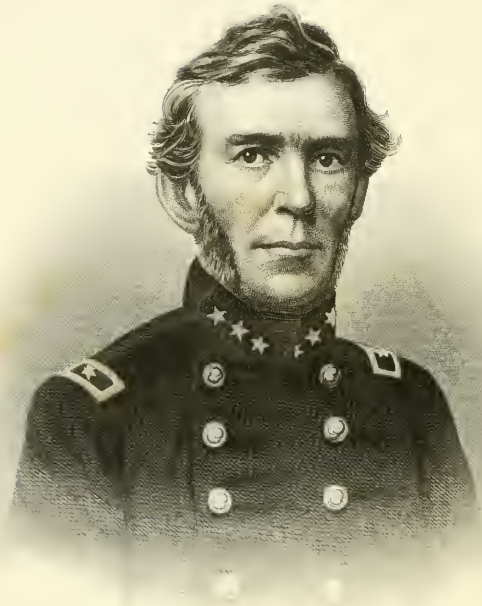

BRAXTON BRAGG

defeat, in very truth. And we can well believe, that a life time of thought passed through General TAYLOR'S mind, as he watched the approach of the masses of the Mexicans on his right, and then turned to his left, to see the frantic efforts of his friends to reach him.

As the Mexicans came on, led by SANTA ANNA in person, they first met the infantry of Kentucky and Illinois, which stood firm until borne down by the very weight of numbers, and forced, not flying, but fighting still, into the dreadful ravine, where the unresisting wounded were slaughtered, and where CLAY and HARDEN and MCKEE were killed. The infantry overwhelmed, the Mexicans next came upon the little battery of artillery. This was all that now stood between the General and defeat. Cannoneer after cannoneer was killed. Horse after horse fell. The officers labored, wounded, as common soldiers. The commander, at one time, might have saved his guns; but while he fought them the pace of the Mexicans was checked. He could hear, too, the approaching artillery that was to relieve him,—and, abandoning the wish, even to save his battery, he fought it until the Mexicans were at the muzzles; and, then, to use the language of CARLETON, "he and the few crippled fellows, who had survived the carnage, hobbled away." But he did not retire until he saw that BRAGG was close at hand—until he had seen the regiments of LANE and DAVIS clambering, at a run, up the side of the last ravine that separated them from the General;—until, in fine, he had seen that in this fearful race his friends would be in season for victory.

It is not necessary to continue the narrative. We all know, that, before the artillery, as it came up and was brought into action, the Mexican army wilted away; and that TAYLOR, standing on the same plain which his army had occupied in the morning, was the victor of the field.

In what has thus been said, it has been our purpose to present, as succinctly as we could, the mere facts in the case,—generalized so as to bring them clearly before our readers,—as the best proof that could be afforded, that the public voice has been right in proclaiming the Hero of Buena Vista. Our statement has not been made for the military reader; nor has it been intended as a description of what was done by each arm of the service engaged; and many matters of detail, and interesting incident have been wholly omitted by us; but we think we have described the great features of the battle rightly; and, in doing so, have enabled our readers to determine the validity of the pretensions now set up in General Wool's behalf.

We repeat, what we have already intimated, as to General Wool's merits. Nothing here said is intended to detract from them; nor, properly considered, can it, in any way, do so. The greatest generals have been defeated—Washington, Napoleon, and the like;—and General Wool cannot be offended by being put into that category. But, though Washington has been called the hero of Yorktown, he is not known as the hero of Brandywine:—and, unless General Wool claims credit as the hero of a defeat, it is as well for his friends to be quiet about his being the hero of his part of the battle of Buena Vista. Z.

From the Baltimore American of January 17, 1849.

THE SEVEN DAYS' BATTLE.

June 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, July 1 and 2, 1862.

Few men in the present day stand out more prominently before the world, in our own country and abroad, than General McClellan; and since the battles upon the Peninsula, few have been more severely criticised. His apparent tardiness in extricating his army from "the swamps of the Chickahominy" has been severely commented upon; and it is with a desire to set the conduct of this *good man*, and really great General, in a fair point of view, that the writer would now attempt to review his plans, and the conduct of that campaign.

Personally, I am unacquainted with General McClellan. I never saw him to know him. As an old soldier, I had my prejudices against him as a young one, "overslaughing" many an old comrade and friend; but "truth is truth," and it is as one who attempts to get at the truth, with an unbiassed judgment, that I now express my opinion of him. It is impossible to write history while historical events are in progress. It is especially so as regards battles. The crowd suppose, because a man has been in a fight, and has the scar of bayonet or bullet, of shell or round shot, therefore he must know all about it; and they gather around him, listen with eyes and ears on the stretch, and report to their neighbors, as gospel, the words of one, who knows less than they do themselves, if they read the newspapers, understand the technicals, and

can put two and two together in the way of drawing inferences. Again, the public treat the army as a man or a horse, to whom it is only necessary to say "go," and motion follows. They fancy that a fight can be witnessed from a hill-top, as a boxing-match can be viewed from a third-story window. They forget that this army, say of 60,000 men only, must eat at least 100,000 meals a day; and if the army is to be kept in prime order, must sleep at least six hours out of the twenty-four. Where there are turnpike roads, artillery can get along very well. Where there are no turnpikes, and the weather is wet, the last carriage of a single company of artillery, the thirteenth, often mires, where the first carriage, a gun technically, has found no difficulty. What then, must it be, when two or three hundred pieces of artillery—each one accompanied by a caisson, or ammunition wagon, and every six with a forge, making six hundred and fifty carriages that go into a battle—have to be carried in wet weather, through a swampy country, like that, for example, on the Chickahominy? This is mere fighting material; to which add two or three thousand wagons for feeding purposes, and you begin to have an idea of what has to be moved when an army moves, to say nothing of the cattle by thousands that have to be driven along, and a horde of camp-followers of all kinds. I am not speaking now of a corps of ten or twenty thousand men who start on a foray with nothing but their shirts, pantaloons and boots to carry, beside their arms; but of an army which, when a victory is gained, is prepared to retain what is won in an enemy's country;—just such an army as McClellan had in the Peninsula.

Another popular delusion grows out of the belief, that, when a battle is won, a general has nothing to do but push ahead. But a great battle, such as Antietam, leaves regiments without officers, and officers without regiments, and reorganization becomes imperative. If

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A. E. Burnside

MAJ. GEN. U. S. A.

there are reserves which have not been used, attacks may be renewed, notwithstanding great losses; but where, as at Antietam, after McClellan had helped Hooker with Mansfield in vain, with Sumner in vain, and when, after he sent away Franklin—who made an advance and held it—he had to say to Burnside, that he had no help to give him but Miller's Battery, six cannon, six caissons, some one hundred and fifty men and eighty horses—and that too against an enemy whose centre was still firm—a pause becomes a necessity.

But if the public do not know all this, Gen. McClellan does; and ignorance should so far be fair towards knowledge, as to give a General, in McClellan's place, to whom victory is as his life's-blood—to whom fame is life, in life—and life in history—credit for good reasons for what he does, if he is found on great occasions, such as in the seven days' fight, to be equal to the greatest: and, especially, when, taking a defeated and demoralized army in hand, on the 2d of September, he makes it, in a week, competent to meet the army that had routed it but a week before; organizes its details with unexampled rapidity; crosses the eastern boundary of the Monocacy with it, sweeps across the valley like a wrathful wind, climbs the western mountains, fights, defeats, drives before him and follows, veteran troops, whom he dislodges from their rocks and defiles, and, rolling down the western slope, engages in a contest like that which rescued Maryland and saved Pennsylvania at Antietam. Talk of McClellan's want of activity! Talk of the public impatience, the public ignorance and conceit; but find no fault with the man who, in such brief space, has accomplished such results. And, then, who fought at Antietam? Who but Sumner, and others, whom he had saved from destruction before Richmond, when the retention of McDowell at Fredericksburg had left him to a fate from which unequalled skill alone extricated him. The public have

tried McDowell twice. They have had Pope with his "head-quarters in the saddle." They have had Fremont. Which of them do they want back again? Let them have common charity for McClellan: and let them have it all the more, because he is silently doing his duty, whether as General-in-chief of the Republic, or as a mere quarter-master at Alexandria, with his veterans in the hands of those who are incompetent to wield them.

It is said—why did he linger so long on the Chickahominy? Because he could advance no faster, by reason of the weight he had to take with him, and the roads over which it had to be borne. An impatient captain from the Potomac will tell you that he delayed. The Captain was ready to move, why should not the General be ready too? This is the argument. The General knew, the Captain knew not, when it was time to start. So with a Colonel. So with some old fighting General, who chafes that *he* is not the leader of the host. But the man who is the leader is brave; he possesses all the facts; his reputation is in the result; so are the lives of tens of thousands; he has the skill of educated knowledge—the skill of previous battles. Why not trust him? It is the height of folly not to do so. Witness Manassas! "Did McClellan delay on the Chickahominy?" was the question lately put to an impartial man, with no leaning to McClellan, one of the cleverest of the Adjutant-Generals of the army, and of a fighting division too. "*Not an hour*," was the reply. "How the man lived through the work he did was the wonder." "Did McClellan delay?" was asked of a Colonel of cavalry, as impatient a spirit as was on the Peninsula, and a brave, cool man. "*Not one day*," was in like manner the answer. "You should have seen the roads," he added, "to remove all doubt." So much for general views; now for the actual campaign.

If interested, take a map of the seat of war; Lloyd's is good. Put your finger on Yorktown. Next find

Urbanna on the Rappahannock; now Fredericksburg. You see the three places. McClellan's plan was to have an army advance from Old Point, an army from Fredericksburg, an army from Urbanna, all upon Richmond. Look again at the map, and you will see that the Confederate army, if it remained to fight at Yorktown, would be taken in the rear by the army advancing from Urbanna. This, the Confederates would not have allowed; and yet, there was but one way to prevent it, which was to retreat, without fighting, from Yorktown, far enough to place the Yorktown and Urbanna armies both in front. Look at the map and be sure of this. But no army was to be sent from Urbanna; and so McClellan had to get to Richmond as best he could; and as he wanted men and had none to spare, instead of storming the entrenchments of the Confederates, he planted batteries and made it essential for them to retreat. Had they fought behind entrenchments at Yorktown, as they fought in the open field at Williamsburg, the Potomac army would have been crippled at the beginning. McClellan forced them away without a fight, and Congress wisely thanked him for the saving of human life.

Finally, he got to the Chickahominy. Instantly, he began to make its swamps passable to a great army in the face of a brave enemy; and when his bridges and roads were ready, he stretched out his right hand, as it were, to McDowell, at Fredericksburg; and,—fighting the battle of Hanover Court House—so as to break up the rail roads by which troops would have been sent, otherwise, from Richmond to prevent it—waited for McDowell's advance; when, the two, marching upon it from the east and from the north, would unquestionably have taken the Capitol of the Confederates. McDowell had 40,000 men and 90 pieces of artillery, but he did not budge. Orders from Washington retained him, until the Confederates nicknamed him, (see the newspapers of the day,) the "standing

joke." Disappointed in aid from Urbanna, disappointed in McDowell, what was McClellan to do? No reinforcements to help him in the work alone; prevented from advancing, as was his purpose, after Fair Oaks, by the tempest which flooded the Chickahominy, what was he to do? As he told Burnside at Antietam, so he was told, we presume, from Washington, "We have no infantry." The President has said as much in one of his speeches. What was he then to do, in the face of an army, increased day by day by conscription, while *his* was day by day diminishing? He had to save it, and to save the immense supplies accumulated at White House and in the field. If, alone, he could not take Richmond, he could accomplish what, at the time, was more important; he could preserve what would save, and did save, Washington. In whose hands, now, would be the National Capitol, if Sumner, Heintzelman, and Keyes, Kearney, Porter and McCall, with their respective troops, had been prisoners of war?—McClellan's stores were, as we have said at White House, and in the field on the Chickahominy. Look at a map of the country around Richmond, and you will see Mechanicsville marked on it. In the beginning of the week McClellan commenced the removal of the stores from White House. Two days he worked in quiet: the third his right wing was attacked at Mechanicsville. If he could hold that point a day longer, the business at White House would be accomplished, and so much of the work would be done. So McCall understood; and at the end of the day he had repulsed the enemy and won the battle No 1. The Pennsylvanians sent word they could hold their ground: but they had fought as long there as was necessary, and they were ordered to fall back to the line of battle selected by McClellan, extending from Gaines' mill on the Chickahominy to Cold Arbor—a long line. The battle No 2 was to be fought and won, that the stores in the field might be saved: for the field of battle

BRIG GEN GEORGE A. McCALL

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commanded more than six bridges in the rear, across which these stores were to be carried, and over which the right and centre of the army was to follow. Had this battle not been won, the right and centre of McClellan's army would have been destroyed in crossing the stream, and the left wing, powerless against overwhelming forces, must have surrendered. It was fought and won; part of the left wing having to cross the stream and lend its aid. While it was going on, baggage, artillery, pontoons, cattle, wounded and stragglers, passed in safety; and, when night came, McClellan crossed himself, and the bridges which had been built to enable him to *advance* on Richmond, were made the means of saving his army when *retreating* from it! Lee never anticipated this. He sent troops to follow McClellan on the road by which he had advanced, and by which, naturally enough, he expected he would retreat. But McClellan out-generalled him. When the stream was crossed, the left wing became the rear guard; and after fighting at Peach Orchard, at Fair Oaks, at Savage's Station, at White Oak creek, the army came to Malvern Hills. By this time, the whole Confederate force was massed in his rear; and here McClellan had to stand at bay and fight another pitched battle. This battle, too, had to be won: and won it was; though, to accomplish this, the centre and right wing had to join, once more, in the fight. When it was over, the Confederates, incapable of farther attack, left the wearied army to find on the banks of the James River the repose it so much needed.

When history describes these battles, it will place them among the greatest that it has had occasion to record; and though it was a retreat, on the whole, which McClellan accomplished, it was a retreat to which victories were essential. If anything were wanting to establish forever the character of the man, it is the fact that at

the end of this retreat, McClellan was still the idol of his soldiers.

Talk of the judgment of the newspapers, of the whole rank and file of the outsiders! Give me the judgment of the army, of that rank and file, and the officers, who go to battle with confidence, that, under McClellan, after he has been tried so often, all will be done that courage and skill can do to secure success, and who prove their confidence with their lives.

Of the recent battles it is unnecessary to say much. McClellan's share in them has been most brilliant. The battle of Antietam was planned and fought with great judgment, skill, coolness and success. The centre of the Confederates was too strong to be attacked across the Antietam: the plan, therefore, was to attack the flanks in succession; first on the right, and then on the left of the Federals. Could Hooker have succeeded, even with the help of Sumner, so that Franklin on his march from Pleasant Valley might have been stopped in the rear of Burnside, so as to cross the Antietam after him and get into Lee's rear, as was intended, the battle would have ended in a rout, and thousands would have been captured, if not all the army taken. But with inadequate numbers, McClellan had to use Franklin on the right, and he had nothing but Miller's battery to give to Burnside. Still, as it was, a great victory was gained.

Let us understand what is meant by gaining a victory. It is not the killing of a certain number of men; and he who kills the most does not win a battle on that account: but it is the accomplishment of an object of your own, or the defeat of an object of your enemy, by a struggle of arms. Thus Taylor won Buena Vista, because he prevented Santa Anna from penetrating to Saltillo; and Scott won the battle of Cerro Gordo, because he drove the Mexicans from the pass which they had determined to maintain. So here, McClellan's victory at Antietam

was a victory in a double sense: he defeated LEE'S object in coming into Maryland, and he forced him to retire into Virginia. Could he have taken the whole Confederate army prisoners, could he have slaughtered twice as many as he did, the victory would have been more effectual in crippling the enemy; but it was a victory, and a great one, notwithstanding. What McCLELLAN will do next, no one knows but himself; but, that there is no man in America who can do better, the past fully justifies us in believing.

Germantown Telegraph, October 29, 1862.

IT will be seen, from the date of the above, that it was written but a short time before the removal of General McCLELLAN; and when the only information possessed by the writer was that obtained from the newspapers. It will also be observed that its object, in part, was to explain some of the causes of the delay with which he was charged. He was removed on the 7th November, when, unquestionably, on the eve of a battle, with the chances all in his favor. General BURNSIDE then took command; and, at the end of some weeks, moved to Fredericksburg, where he failed in his attack on the —— of December, 1862. With no purpose to depreciate a gallant officer, it may be said, that, whatever may have been gained, otherwise, by the change, nothing was gained in the way of alacrity!

GETTYSBURG.

July 3, 1863.

THE PINCH OF THE FIGHT.

My Dear George:—A soldier in battle is not always competent to describe more than what passes immediately around him. A spectator on a distant hill-top, out of reach of shot and shell, is much more capable of doing justice to the subject. Still, if one can only keep cool, not always an easy thing to do, one can gather, in the hurry of the strife, bits of information here and there, which, afterwards patched together, may be of service to those who write history. Of some such use may be the following contribution to the mass of materials already existing in connection with the memorable fight at Gettysburg on the 3d of July, 1863.

In the first place, I must make you understand the ground. Imagine yourself on the road from Taneytown to Gettysburg, approaching the latter place from the southward. Ascending very gradually, you gain the crest of a range of slopes, rather than hills, and look down upon the village in the valley in front. To the right, and separated from the road by a space large enough to plant and work a battery, is the now well known cemetery: beyond it are woods that bend along the edge of the slopes, which are here steeper than elsewhere, and bending to the southward, form what may be called the right side of a horse shoe, whose toe is about in the cemetery. To the left of the road, on the crest, there

Engd by A H Pitcher

GEN DANIEL E SICKLES

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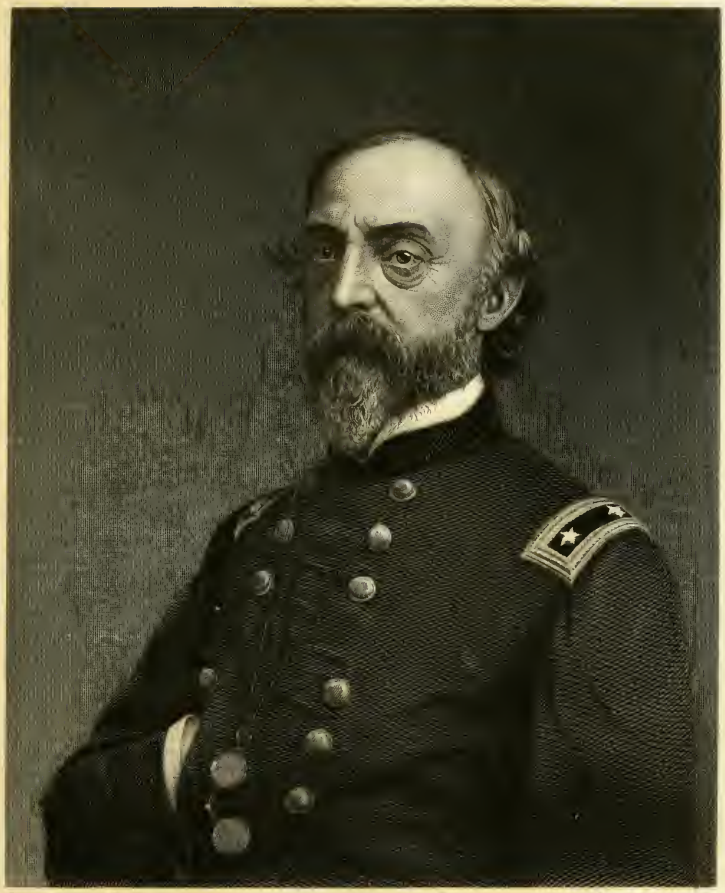
are some large trees in a slight depression of the general surface, and beyond there is a house on a right line nearly with the cemetery. At this house the left side of the horse shoe bends backward; and the crest is, afterwards, almost parallel with the road from Taneytown, gradually decreasing in height, however, until it falls into the general surface of the country, to reappear again in other slopes that bring up against the hill beyond the left heel of the horse shoe, called Round Top. After passing the house last mentioned, you come to a clump of trees, some of which were cut down before the battle.

Now, all around this horse shoe—from the right heel to the toe, and thence, by the house and the clump of trees and the flattening of the crest, to the left heel, opposite Round Top, is a valley;—not a dead plain—but with undulations sufficient to afford cover to advancing troops; and beyond this valley are woods upon the opposite hills. These woods and these hills were occupied by Lee's army. The horse shoe was the position of the Union troops. The road from Emmittsburg to Gettysburg runs along the base of the left side of the horse shoe; and there is a two story brick house upon it, at about three hundred yards from the house at the bend of the crest already described. General Meade's head-quarters were at a house on the Taneytown road, not far from the cemetery; and further down the road, or nearer Taneytown, was another house, where some general officers were seen taking a hurried meal just before the fight of the 3d—a lunch in which the writer was not fortunate enough to participate.

Of the fight of the 2d, Thursday, I have little to say. I was not in it, as it happened. I only know that it was a touch and go affair, in consequence, as they told me, of Sickles swinging forward his corps until it occupied a position nearly at right angles with the left arm of the horse shoe; whereas, Sickles whose left was the heel of

the shoe, ought to have kept his place on the outline of the crest. He was tempted, I heard, by a hillock, on which he thought he could place his guns advantageously. But he only looked at one side of the question; for when he swung round, he brought his left nearer to LEE than it had been, and to where it was exposed to an enfilading fire, that not only rolled it up in a little while, but sent it rolling in upon the horse shoe, and beyond its line, in what might, they tell me, be called confusion, the shot and shell ranging onwards until head-quarters became uncomfortable. The enemy were following SICKLES fast, when MEADE, who they say, had disapproved the change of position, ordered up the whole Twelfth Corps as a reinforcement, which came on the ground in time, and helped the second division, which was SICKLES' neighbor on his right, to check, drive back and follow the enemy, who had actually gained a position inside our lines. I know little of this. It was getting towards dusk, and there was a great din. But one or two things I do know. Just as the Twelfth Corps was going in, up rides General MEADE, and was met by a general officer, GIBBON, I think, who said to him—"General, I think this will do," to which MEADE replied—"If it don't, we are in a bad box," when the other repeated—"I think it will do;" and then the two rode away. And it did do, handsomely; and our men cheered, and the day was won; for the attack, as is now well known, was on the left on Thursday, and came only too near to a success, owing, it is said, to the causes here mentioned. I was not, however, in the way of knowing much about it, as I have already stated.

Of Friday's fight I know more. LEE's attack was, on this day, on what is called the left centre, and mainly took place between the house at the turn of the horse shoe and the clump of trees above described. This position was held principally by the Second Corps, the second brigade of the second division of which, under



Photographed by [illegible]

GEORGE G. MEADE

Geo. G. Meade

[illegible] the year 1866 by Rice Butler [illegible] in the [illegible] District Court [illegible]

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Wm. F. Hancock

[illegible] HANCOCK

General WEBB, was on the right, looking over the valley and down upon the Emmittsburg road. Next to it on the left was the third brigade, (HALL'S,) the first brigade being still further on the left; the three brigades, forming the second division, being thus in line on the crest. If you bear in mind my description, you will see now that a fire from the opposite side of the valley at the Second Corps (HANCOCK'S), and the second division of it (GIBBON'S), would, if it ranged further, make MEADE'S head-quarters a hot place, and also the house where the officers lunched, already mentioned, as well as the cemetery.

My knowledge being confined mainly to the second division, I will not pretend to say much about anything else, for the reason given at the head of this letter; nor will this failure on my part be of much importance, because, with the fortunes of the Second Corps and its second division, the fate of the fight was closely connected.

Just in front of WEBB'S brigade, and a little way down the slope towards the valley, was a stone wall, and to the left, and somewhat in advance of the stone wall, was a rail fence in front of HALL'S brigade. This wall, and fence and the clump of trees were the features of the day, let me tell you. Away to the left was the Third Corps, I think, and on the right, facing Gettysburg, the Eleventh Corps. About what took place on the right, or to the east of the Gettysburg road, I knew little or nothing.

Now, that you have my theatre of observation, let me come to what took place on it. The morning of the 3d passed quietly. We had heard, as a camp rumor, that MEADE had said, that, "if LEE could afford to wait so could he;" and we fancied that the waiting had begun, when, about one o'clock on Friday, a single gun on the opposite side of the valley went "bang," and there was the whirr of a shot. Presently, another "bang," and then, "bang, bang, bang, bang, bang," until it was impossible to count

the shots; and along with these reports came every kind of hurtle, whirr, whistle and shriek, that man has heard or can imagine, the most terrific of all proceeding from some elongated missile, which ceasing to revolve around its axis, dashed "promiscuously" through the air, becoming visible in such event. The 12-pound shot were also to be seen as they came; and the worst of it was, that every shot seemed to be coming straight to hit you between the eyes. Horses were the greatest sufferers here; for the men laid down and escaped; but the poor brutes had to take it standing. General GIBBON had sent two regiments to the brick house on the Emmitsburg road, from which we inferred that he expected an attack in that directon. Although Generals don't stop to tell the soldiers what they are doing this or that for, yet now and then one catches a word, when one happens to be near by, and picks up a hint, if the infernal rampage allows time for thought. So, when General GIBBON was heard to say to an aide, "Tell General MEADE that the enemy is advancing his infantry in force upon my front," and the aide was seen to put spurs to his horse and go of in a full gallop, we began to brace up for what was coming. By this time, after an hour and a half of such firing as I have described, we could see, from where we stood, the enemy moving up in three lines from out of the woods. They would come out, marching by a flank, till they reached the desired ground, when they would face to the front. Their second line was about a hundred yards in the rear of the first, and on the edge of the woods, across the valley, was a third line. It was a splendid sight to see them. No one looked at their uniforms or no uniforms, their hats, or caps, or bare heads. Everybody looked at the beautiful way in which they arrayed themselves in order of attack, regardless of the shot and shell which we threw into their ranks. The soldiers on our side again and again praised it, while they awaited the approach of the enemy. Nor did

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BRIG. GEN. W. S. HANCOCK.

they wait long. When they approached to within about two hundred yards, a part of our division, I think it was Hall's brigade, opened fire, and we could see men fall, and others go to the rear. Still on they came, crowding a little in front, but as steady as rocks. Just then an officer rode by, and said the Vermont regiment on the left was worrying the enemy. But they did not mind that either; on they came. When they got within a hundred yards, more of our regiments opened fire; but it did not stop them. Some regiments reserved their fire until they got within fifty yards, and then the enemy fell fast; but still, on they came, and we could see their faces, and hear their officers. It was almost too much for human nature to stand, and a portion of the second brigade, which was behind the stone fence, you will recollect, began to leave cover—not because the enemy was upon it, but because it seemed impossible to stay. Not a man *ran*, or seemed to feel like running, but they fell back slowly, loading as they did so, and firing, while the flags of the enemy—which are small red affairs with a white cross diagonal on them—got up to the stone wall, and some crossed the line of rail fence, perhaps a hundred or so, led, as I heard, by General Armistead. They were able to do this, because, as I have told you, the second brigade did not stand up to the line of the stone wall and rail fence, so that the division was bent backward as it were, in the centre, the ends on the right and left standing fast; at least, so it seemed, for there was a great deal of smoke and a terrific noise to confuse one's power of calm observation.

This was the pinch, and the officers knew it. General Gibbon had just been hit, some one said, and almost at the same time General Hancock was badly wounded, and both were taken off the field to the rear. But I recollect seeing Gibbon's aide try to rally the men, and do it manfully, too. He did a man's part in steadying the line.

So did WEBB, who was on foot in the midst of the men. Entreaty, command, expostulation, encouragement, were employed. WEBB was everywhere. So was Colonel SMITH, of a Pennsylvania regiment. At this time the enemy were crowding over the stone-fence near the clump of trees, and their red flags were waving, as it seemed to me, in triumph already; though HALL was all right and his men were steady on our left. Presently, some one near me said, that the enemy were massing their men in front of WEBB, opposite the clump of trees, and we began to wish for HALL'S help. By this time, the officers had stopped the falling back and were driving stragglers to the front, though we did not go forward to the stone-wall, yet; but all were facing the enemy and firing heavily—not in ranks, for every one seemed going it pretty much on his own hook—but cheerfully, which was a good sign. We had wished for HALL, so he came as wished, and his right marched by a flank to our left and got mixed with our men. As the 3d brigade, (HALL'S,) came up by the flank, there was a disposition, under the heavy fire to which it was exposed, to edge away from the stone-wall; but the officers overcame this, and soon a compact body of men was formed, who delivered a heavy and well directed fire upon the enemy as they came over the wall and rail-fence towards us. Just then an officer, GIBBON'S aide—I think it was the same who had gone for HALL—came over with some regiments from the 1st brigade (HARROW'S) on our left, and from him it was reported, that the extreme right of the enemy, opposite to our left, was breaking badly, and that men, there, were running to the rear. This greatly encouraged us, and we cheered and went to our work with a will. At this time, we were behind the crest, which was between us and the stone-wall, which was a little way down the hill towards the valley; and at the wall, between fifty and sixty yards from us, were the enemy, many of them over the wall.

Engd by A H Ritchie

BVT MAJ. GEN ALEX S. WEBB U.S.A

We now advanced, and could see, as we did so, that the battle was raging in front of the third division. We delivered a steady fire from the crest, at short range, which cleared the wall, to which we then rushed, flags waving and men shouting. WEBB, HALL, DEVEREUX, MALLON and SMITH were among the men. Officers, on both sides, were using their pistols. The color sergeant of the 72d Pennsylvania went forward with his colors, the lance of which had been shot in two. The soldiers followed him with a rush. No one wanted to straggle now. Other colors were borne forward; the wall was gained and crossed, and the work of taking prisoners commenced. Hundreds, who threw down their arms and rushed towards us, were sent to the rear. Here and there, there was a struggle for flags; but the battle was ended in this part of the field. LEE'S great assault had failed. Going back with some prisoners across the wall and over the crest, I saw General MEADE, who came on the ground with his son, who was his aide. He stopped to speak to General GIBBON'S aide (HASCALL) and said, in his sharp way, "How is it going here?" or something that sounded like it. He was told that the attack was repulsed; when he repeated, "What, is the assault entirely repulsed?" When the aide again told him he thought it was, he said, "Thank God," and made a motion to wave his hat, but he did not, but waved his right hand and hurrahed, while his son took off his hat and hurrahed like a good fellow. We men stood and stared, and then passed on, as the General gave orders in a quick, short way, which seemed to be about the placing of reinforcements. The dead men and horses were lying thick around; there was still some firing going on, and we were all—that is, all of us that were left—begrimed with powder and dust, and many were bleeding; but it was a good thing to see our General so cool, so much at his ease, and speaking in such a soldierly way; and when he said "Thank God," many

of us said "Amen." The reinforcements soon came up: but we had done without them, and in a little while all was quiet under the clump of trees; and the stone-wall and the rail-fence, and the heaps of dead, were once more at rest—the last, forever.

One thing struck me much. It was the intelligence of the men. For a good part of the time, and in the heaviest of the fight, the ranks were lost, and there was no organization. The officers were in our midst, everywhere; but still we kept together, and seemed to understand, without orders, what to do, and to feel that the quicker we fired the sooner the thing would be over. As to standing in line and blazing away regularly, why we never thought of it, and yet our fire was fearful, after the falling back from the wall was checked.

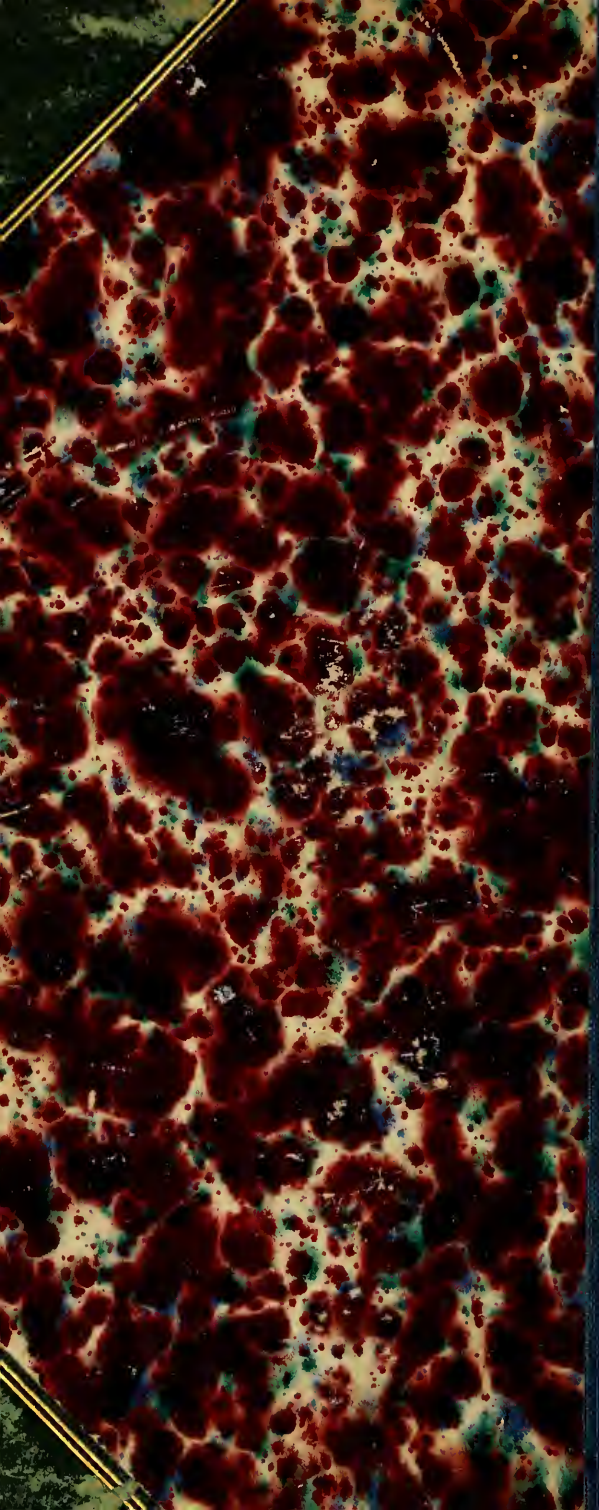
I have tried to get some account of the killed, wounded and missing of our division, to show that I have not written a boastful letter, but plain facts as they came to my knowledge. I have not got any accurate account, but think it nearly right to say, that we went into the fight with about 3800 men in the second division, and came out of it with a loss of near 1800, which was a greater loss, I am told, than was suffered by any other division of the army. We lost no gun, and the Provost Marshal credits us with 2300 prisoners; and we buried, by count, within a few of 800 of the enemy dead in our front.

After the assault on our division was repulsed, there was another made on the left of us, a good way off, but it failed, and by six o'clock the fight was done everywhere. The great attack of the day, I think, was on us. If they fought more elsewhere, it was out of our sight and hearing.

The next day, some of us were talking the battle over, and our conclusion was, that the attack was splendidly made, after the cannonade ceased, on the 3d, and that, although it was at first successful, and some of our guns

were in the enemy's hands, yet that we beat them off by having good pluck, some officers that knew their duty when we were shaky, and a fire of musketry that human beings could not stand.

When people who have been in battles attempt to describe them, as a whole, don't believe them. I have told you about as much as one man can ever see or hear, and am

Your friend,

From the Baltimore American, August 6, 1863.